

# **Dyspraxia/Developmental Coordination Disorder**

## **Part 1: What's in a name?**

Dyspraxia has been known by many different names over the last few decades. From “clumsy child” to “minimal brain damage” (in what I like to call the “dark ages”) to Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), Motor Learning Disorder and Dyspraxia. Dyspraxia is the most commonly used term in some countries, including the UK & Ireland, although DCD has been the recommended term since 1994 and continues to be, despite it being “probably not the most accurate descriptor of the disorder” (Mandich & Polatajko, 2003, pg 409). However, despite it being the recommended term, Developmental Coordination Disorder has been slow to take off in Ireland and many people and organisations do not seem to understand or acknowledge this disorder, including, in many instances, the Department of Education and Science, who, in many cases, will offer support for children diagnosed with dyspraxia but not for those diagnosed with DCD.

In my opinion, the term DCD does not accurately reflect the difficulties faced by these children/adolescents. Developmental Coordination Disorder implies that the main challenge of these children/adolescents is coordination, and while the majority of these children do have coordination difficulties, this completely minimised the remaining challenges faced by these children/adolescents, including organisational skills, social skills, self esteem, and many more (which we will discuss in part 2).

A particular school of thought considers dyspraxia to be a sub-group of a Regulatory Sensory Processing Disorder and this group is gaining in popularity. It is to this group that we, as occupational therapists, tend to subscribe, most likely because experience working with these children/adolescents and their families shows us that almost all of these children have sensory processing deficits and modulation difficulties and logic tells us that not understanding the sensory information we get from our bodies can result in us being clumsy and having difficulty figuring out how to use our bodies.

So, in conclusion, dyspraxia goes by many names and it is important for people who live with or work with those with these difficulties to understand this and to be open to information about all of these terms as they will most likely apply to this group of children/adolescents.